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ABSTRACT

The regional approach to postsecondary education in Minnesota is discussed in this publication. A review of the regional approach is provided along with articles on the program's impact in specific regions. The primary goal of the regional centers in Rochester, the Iron Range, and Wadena is to meet regional needs more efficiently and effectively through increased cooperation among area institutions and coordination of programs and planning. Generally, the students are adults for whom access to four-year institutions is difficult because of job and family responsibilities. The centers do not offer degrees, but through the use of joint schedules, joint advising services, and other means, students may select courses and earn degrees from participating institutions that bring their resources (faculty, courses, etc.) to the project area. (SPG)

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Cooperation, coordination work

Regional center approach serves residents effectively

Thousands of Minnesota residents in three regions of the state have enjoyed increased opportunities for post-secondary education the past four years thanks to a successful experiment which relies on cooperation among institutions and effective use of their existing resources.

The regional approach has proven an economical way for the state to assist residents in obtaining post-secondary education services long desired but not available. And the project has succeeded without the construction of expensive, new buildings or large appropriations.

Despite a history of generous support for post-secondary education, Minnesota in the early 1970s still found itself with an urgent need to improve access to higher education and increase degree opportunities for residents in several parts of the state.

In some areas, residents were still actively campaigning for new two-year and four-year institutions. But following the higher education building boom of the 1960s, hopes for constructing new institutions diminished in the face of economic recession and projected enrollment declines.

Recognizing that the educational needs of many residents were not being met but questioning the feasibility of another major investment in buildings for higher education, the 1973 Minnesota Legislature authorized a new approach – experimental regional centers in Rochester, the Iron Range and Wadena.

It was a new concept for Minnesota higher education, and it began with much uncertainty.

"Nobody knew exactly what they were to be, how they would work or if anyone would participate," said former HECB Executive Director Richard C. Hawk. "In the past, institutions in the areas had not participated in cooperative programs in any substantial way. Moreover, the budget was small for the projects and it was uncertain how the communities would respond to this kind of approach."

Although the centers have developed differently in response to the environment in each region, they share the same primary goal: to meet regional needs more efficiently and effectively through increased cooperation among area institutions and coordination of programs and planning.

The centers are designed primarily to provide studies leading to the bachelor's and master's degrees. But they do much more. From an early emphasis on education programs for teachers, the centers now coordinate a wide variety of programs ranging from upper division degrees in several fields to one or two-day workshops for residents interested in a special subject. A major purpose of the centers is to identify needs not being met by existing institutions and stimulate efforts to meet them.

Students of all ages and backgrounds are being served. Generally, the students are adults for whom access to four-year institutions is difficult because of job and family responsibilities. These people are unable to commute long distances and can pursue their education only if it is made available locally.

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The mandate: to improve access, eliminate duplication

The 1973 Minnesota Legislature directed the HECB to test the feasibility of improving the ability of post-secondary education to meet regional needs through increased inter-institutional cooperation and coordinated planning.

The Board was authorized "to develop and administer three experimental regional projects aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of post-secondary education in meeting regional needs through increased inter-institutional cooperation and coordination of programs and planning within a region."

In developing the three projects, the Board was to fulfill five objectives:

(1) to improve the accessibility of all levels of post-secondary education to residents of the regions,

(2) to eliminate any unwarranted duplication in the regions,

(3) to facilitate effective use of post-secondary education facilities and services for meeting regional needs,

(4) to provide for more effective liaison between regional planning and coordination of post-secondary education with regional planning and coordination of other public services, and

(5) to test means for accomplishing greater inter-institutional cooperative efforts for meeting local and regional needs of Minnesota residents.

"All post-secondary education institutions are requested to cooperate and assist the commission in developing the project," the law said.

The legislature appropriated $175,000 to the HECB to cover costs in the first biennium for the experiments.

In 1975 the legislature appropriated $247,813 to HECB to continue development of the projects.

Regional center approach meets needs

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The students enroll for many reasons – to complete degrees started but left unfinished years ago, to start college careers, to earn advanced degrees, to complete certification requirements or to enrich their lives.

The centers do not offer degrees. But through the use of joint schedules, joint advising services and other means, students may select courses and earn degrees from participating institutions that bring their resources (faculty, courses, etc.) to the project areas.

Centers emerge as brokers

In fact, the centers have emerged as brokers or intermediaries between individual citizens or groups of interested residents and the post-secondary institutions. The center staff try to determine the needs of residents and arrange for the appropriate institutions to meet the needs.

The three projects are administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, a state agency responsible for planning and coordinating all post-secondary education.

Over thirty public and private post-secondary institutions in the state participate in the three projects.

Leaders from the community or communities in each region and representatives from each of the participating institutions help in selecting staff for the centers and in identifying priorities for the year. A coordinator to direct each center is selected by the HECB executive director with advice from the local advisory committee.

Now, four years after the start of the experiment, community leaders, representatives of area institutions, state education planners and students generally express enthusiasm about the accomplishments and potential of this approach. They acknowledge that such an approach is not without problems and frustrations, and they say future success will depend on commitments by area institutions, financial support and a positive student response.

"Regional planning will become increasingly important as enrollment patterns change and there is additional pressure to meet the needs of new post-secondary populations while available tax dollars are limited."

– Richard C. Hawk

To leaders of the communities, the centers are hardly the four-year institutions they would have preferred; but higher education opportunities have been enhanced.

To representatives of post-secondary institutions, the regional centers have been an effective means of improving communication and cooperation. Institutional representatives are talking to each other in ways that had not occurred before; and as a result, someone is paying attention to students' needs.

Thousands of residents enroll

And based upon available data as well as interviews with students and citizen leaders, thousands of residents are taking advantage of the opportunities. It is apparent that the centers and participating institutions are meeting the challenges issued by the 1973 Legislature.

From the fall of 1973 to summer 1976, an increase of approximately 8,000 headcount enrollments occurred in courses offered by participating institutions in the three regions; between 5,000 and 6,000 of these appeared to be the result of cooperative institutional efforts, better planning, more widespread advertising and improved student advising.

The rate of increase in credit courses has not been as dramatic as the enrollment growth. But officials point out that while the number of courses for each region has grown, meeting existing needs and avoiding unwarranted duplication are equally important to the missions of the centers.

During the four years, the proportion of non-education courses (teacher training) has increased in each of the regions, resulting in a broadening of curricular opportunities for those residents who wish to pursue degree or certificate requirements in fields other than education. The centers have demonstrated that degree programs can be developed and the required courses made available in the regions.

Within the past year, individuals who started work on degree programs in 1973-74 have begun to complete their

GRANTS, SUBSIDIES, AND GIFTS TO REGIONAL CENTERS 1973 – 1976

Center	Space & Equipment	Grants & Gifts	Total
Wadena	$22,488	$ 39,852.56	$ 62,340.56
Rochester	$30,000	$101,400	$131,400
Iron Range	$23,437.50	$ 50,000	$ 73,437.50
TOTALS	$75,925.50	$191,252.56	$267,178.06

Regional approach serves residents

programs; and based on current enrollments, hundreds are expected to earn degrees in coming years.

Local support is significant

An indicator of local support is the extent to which financial support has been generated. In addition to the modest state appropriation, many grants, subsidies and gifts have been provided. A summary of these from 1973 to the summer of 1976 shows a total of $267,178. This represents significant support for the centers by individuals, organizations and institutions in the regions. Only a small portion of this total has been used to support personnel. The rest has been allocated directly for educational services.

The decision to try the regional center approach in Minnesota, as opposed to building new institutions, is typical of many developments throughout the country.

In a climate of tight budgets and increased competition for limited resources, an increasing number of cooperative efforts have been initiated in response to requests for more program options and needs expressed by adult and part-time students.

The successful experiments have resulted in increased cost-effectiveness, a reduction of duplicated services, greater efficiencies and availability of opportunities. Regional efforts have focused on decentralizing decisionmaking, better coordinating services in each area and encouraging greater involvement in planning by area citizens. And such centers will play an important role in the future.

"Regional planning will become increasingly important as enrollment patterns change and there is additional pressure to meet the needs of new post-secondary populations while available tax dollars are limited," Hawk said.

"Planning and coordination on a statewide basis won't be sufficient to meet these needs and so we will have to develop structures that get at these needs on a regional basis.

"The lack of specific structure could result in program gaps in some areas but also duplication in other areas as institutions try to meet the same needs."

HECB maintains a low profile

The Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board is a state agency with comprehensive responsibility for planning and coordinating all post-secondary education, both public and private, in the state. The Board, established in 1965, administers several state and federal programs including the three regional centers.

The Board includes 11 members who are appointed with the consent of the Minnesota Senate. It includes one member from each congressional district and three at-large members.

The Board has worked to improve cooperation among institutions in meeting the needs of residents on several levels — cooperation between neighboring states, among institutions in regions and among institutions. Results of these efforts can be found in reciprocal tuition agreements with Wisconsin and North Dakota, development of the three regional centers and various cooperative arrangements among schools. These include sharing of facilities and library resources, cross registration, and improved transfer opportunities.

In developing the regional centers, the Board has assumed a low profile, relying heavily on the advice of citizens of the regions and representatives of area institutions.

"It was a real plus for HECB and staff to take the concept and tread a narrow line of becoming an institution and monitoring the cooperation of institutions in the field without overexposure," HECB President Donald Hamerlinck said. "It is hard to do that out of St. Paul with three centers located in diverse spots in the state.

"In no way did HECB dictate how the projects should function. This is a proper role for coordination. The Board maintained a low profile yet provided the management necessary for them to succeed.

"It shows that the motivation must come from the people who gain the most. We couldn't force feed them to succeed. They had to decide. The Board provided administrative and management support."

Minnesota centers recognized nationally

Minnesota's success in meeting post-secondary education needs in three areas through the regional center approach has been recognized nationally during the past few months.

Minnesota has been named one of six states to be studied as part of a Ford Foundation-funded national project examining efforts to organize and support post-secondary education on a regional basis.

The two-year study is to be conducted by the Center for Higher Education at Pennsylvania State University under a $113,700 grant from the Ford Foundation. Minnesota was selected because it is one of the first states to move toward regionalism in response to enrollment changes and fiscal constraints.

The study is aimed at advancing the level of understanding and encouraging the development of regionalism in state planning, policymaking and resource allocation for colleges and universities.

In-depth studies will be made of regionalism in Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois and California.

In a preliminary survey on regionalism, Prof. S.V. Martorana of Pennsylvania State discovered that 31 states already are actively engaged in some degree of regionalism as one aspect of long-range planning for, and coordination of, post-secondary resources; 46 different plans for regionalization either were in effect or under study for adoption in those 31 states; and 9 states had specifically encouraged regionalization by statutory language.

Rochester has been selected as one of six model communities to be studied in a nationwide research project on continuing education opportunities for people seeking mid-career changes.

Focus of the project will be on the Rochester regional center, its participating institutions and advisory task forces.

The project will be conducted by researchers from the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education at the University of California Berkeley. It is sponsored by the Division of Community Development and Continuing Education in the U.S. Office of Education.

The studies will involve site visits, consultations, extensive surveys of post-secondary educational resources and an examination of formal and informal institutional relationships already in effect.

Range center fills gaps, expands services

Despite the presence of many lower division institutions on the Range, residents had sought upper division and graduate program offerings for many years.

For a time there was agitation for a four-year college. But with the development of the University of Minnesota's Duluth campus only 60 miles away, support for a four-year Range institution was localized.

Recognizing the many unmet needs, Virginia State Representative Peter X. Fugina in 1971 introduced a bill in the Minnesota Legislature to establish a Range regional center. No action was taken that year, but the Range center was included in the 1973 enabling legislation.

RANGE CENTER

Date Opened: May 1974

Headquarters: Room 150, Mesabi Community College, Virginia, Minnesota 55792.

Coordinator: Patrick Baudhuin

Service Area: With Virginia as a reference point, 50 miles east to Ely, 60 miles west to Grand Rapids, 100 miles north to International Falls.

Participating Institutions: UMD, Bemidji State University, Mesabi Community College, Rainy River Community College, College of St. Scholastica, Hibbing Community College, Eveleth AVTI, Hibbing AVTI, Vermilion Community College, Itasca Community College.

Advisory Structure: Northeastern Minnesota Higher Education Council — includes citizens from area communities and representatives of participating institutions.

Chairman: Hon. Peter X. Fugina

Center Phone: 218-741-2410

An advisory group of Range community leaders and institutional representatives first met September 19, 1973 and selected Fugina chairman. The advisory task force now is called the Northeastern Minnesota Higher Education Council. It is an important part of the center's operation.

In March 1974, Pat Baudhuin of Hoyt Lakes was appointed coordinator. He was assigned primary responsibility for developing the project; council members, students and college officials agree that his tireless efforts have been a major reason for the project's success.

Actual operation of the project began in May 1974 when the center office opened at Mesabi Community College in Virginia. From the start, all activities under the center were developed on a Range-wide basis.

The direction of the Range project has been shaped in part by the large geographic area it covers, by the current economic upsurge on the Range, and by the residents' long-standing appreciation for education.

A major challenge has been attempting to serve the large geographic region, one that has clusters of populated areas but no central focus of population. The region includes 13 communities with populations of 5,000 to 10,000 and three communities with populations over 10,000. Within the region is a substantial Indian population which has been looking to the post-secondary institutions for better service, and now with some help from the center is receiving it.

Due to the geographic characteristics, the center must try to find coalitions of interested people of sufficient size to merit a course offering. Often courses are compacted into short time periods to draw students from a 90-mile radius. In this way, the center can reduce some of the travel problems faced by both students and faculty.

Development of the center comes while the Range is experiencing an economic boom with heavy investments of new construction capital, influx of highly skilled labor, and the growth of taconite and related industries. One effect of the boom is an increased demand for retraining and upgrading of people in those industries.

For most social and ethnic groups on the Range, the provision of educational opportunities for their children always has been a priority. This appreciation of education is reflected in the pride Range residents take in their elementary and secondary schools and their continued support for community colleges and vocational-technical institutes.

Enthusiastic support by Range residents for education has spread to the new regional center. Most people think the experiment is working well.

"I felt 20 years ago that this was a realistic solution to the needs," Fugina said. "It took 10 years for the idea to get going, and then this approach became noticed nationally."

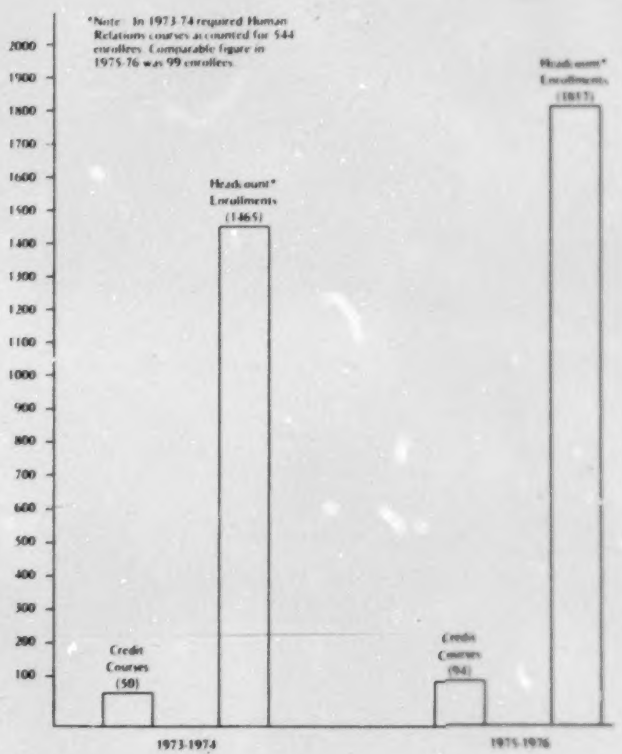
"It's working out better than I thought it might," said Emil Erickson of Virginia, vice president of the HECB and former instructor at the community college in Virginia. "When it was set up, we were unsure. We were experimenting; it might work or it might not. This one is working.

"Here on the Range it is a little more difficult to organize due to the distances between people. But Pat (Baudhuin) has done a resourceful job in exploring needs and working them into program proposals."

"The project takes a number of years to develop," said Vladimir Shipka of Grand Rapids.

"You don't start up without problems," said Shipka, a former state senator who is both a member of the HECB and the center's advisory council. "You're dealing with institutions

COMPARISON OF CREDIT COURSES AND HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENT IN IRON RANGE REGION IN 1973-74 AND 1975-76



Range center eases burden for determined students

Residents of Minnesota's Iron Range take their education seriously.

Consider the experiences of Harold Braaten and Bill Moraski. Braaten, who lives in Biwabik, and Moraski, who lives in Hoyt Lakes, worked on their college degrees for about seven years. They both graduated at the end of spring quarter in 1976 with B.S. degrees in Industrial Technology.

But it wasn't easy for the two, determined Erie Mining Company employees.

Braaten earlier had completed an A.S. degree at Virginia Junior College. Moraski had taken classes at Mesabi Community College.

Then for five years they commuted 120 miles roundtrip three or four nights a week to take courses at the University of Minnesota's Duluth campus.

Yet after five years they were still a long way from obtaining their degrees.

Then three years ago, the development of an experimental post-secondary education center on the Range helped change their situation.

Shortly after the project began, Moraski, a welder with Erie Mining since 1960, and Braaten, an electrician with the company since 1960, joined forces with the center's coordinator Pat Baudhuin.

Through their efforts and efforts by Bemidji State University officials, plans were completed for Bemidji State to offer a B.S. degree in Industrial Technology on the Range.

As pioneers for the first major degree program on the Range, Braaten, 47, and Moraski, 37, encountered some frustrations. But the two veterans graduated. Both were promoted recently to supervisory positions with Erie Mining Company.

"I'm grateful for the center's help," said Moraski, who claims he still would be driving to Duluth if necessary. "I think it's a good program and has much potential. I would like to see the regional center go well. A lot of people want it."

that traditionally regarded their own prerogatives jealously. But the institutions are coming around now."

The center can be proud of several major accomplishments, says former HECB Executive Director Richard C. Hawk.

"The center has filled several gaps in services and has encouraged existing institutions to expand their range of services appropriately," he said. "It has created and maintained a healthy dialogue using the council as a focus. There has been a very significant increase in non-teacher education opportunities. New programs – some not available at all before – have been developed."

Residents of region respond positively

Based on enrollments, the response by residents has been positive. For the 1974-75 school year, the first full year of operation, 1,526 persons registered for 66 courses. There were 42 education-related courses drawing 872 students and 24 non-education courses attracting 654 students. During the 1975-76 school year, 1,817 persons registered for 94 courses. There were 47 education-related courses drawing 892 students and 47 non-education courses attracting 925 students.

This year approximately 1,400 students have registered for 86 courses.

Courses have been offered in Aurora, Babbitt, Biwabik, Chisholm, Ely, Eveleth, Grand Rapids, Hibbing, International Falls, Nashwauk, Virginia and the Nett Lake Indian Reservation.

The courses have been provided by UMD, Bemidji State University, Mesabi Community College, Rainy River Community College, and St. Scholastica.

As a result of the center's activities, improved use of space and facilities has been achieved. In fact, parking and classroom space now are at a premium most nights. Courses have been offered at community college facilities, AVTI facilities, and secondary school facilities in the region.

Surveys conducted during the first two years found that 60 percent of the students taking courses through the center were male and 40 percent were veterans. Fifty-five percent of the students were in the 26-55 age group. The composition has changed somewhat this year with fewer veterans enrolling and the percentage of women up to 50 percent.

Students came from 59 communities, about half under 5,000 people. The majority of students were teachers, but students represented a wide range of occupations including law enforcement personnel, retired dentists, accountants, construction workers, mining company employees and high school students.

Students possessed a variety of educational credentials with about half holding bachelor's degrees and 10 percent having earned master's degrees. Educational goals included bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, fifth year certificates, and other educational certificates; more than 10 percent said they enrolled for personal enrichment.

Although the early emphasis was on programs for teachers, the center now coordinates a much wider variety of programs ranging from a major in Industrial Technology offered by Bemidji State to shorter, specialized courses requested by residents.

By spring quarter 1975, approximately half the classes offered were for persons other than teachers; this was a dramatic change from fall 1974 when only one or two courses

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After 19 years, she returns to earn degree

With help from the Range regional center, Norma Jeanne Schleppegrell of Hibbing was able to return to school and complete her degree after 19 years.

In 1946 and 1947 she attended journalism classes at the University of Minnesota. She also attended Hibbing Community College. In 1948 she was married. With seven children, she forgot about the degree and "enjoyed being part of a big family.

"However, with our children growing up, my old yearning for a degree came back," she said. "When I heard of Mr. Baudhuin (Range project coordinator), I arranged an interview with him. He gave me lots of suggestions and encouragement."

Mrs. Schleppegrell worked as a secretary-receptionist at Hibbing General Hospital from 1967-1973. She served as a psychiatric aide from 1973-1975.

In October 1974 she enrolled in Bemidji State's External Studies Program and graduated the following summer with a major in Community Services and a special skill area in mental health.

Having completed her degree, she now is program coordinator for the Day Hospital Program, Human Resource Center at Hibbing General Hospital.

Programs developed, delivered to Range

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were for non-teachers.

The success of Bemidji State University's Industrial Technology Program has demonstrated that a major program can be developed and brought to the Range.

In 1974 several developments occurred which led to the availability of the Industrial Technology degree on the Range. One was the great interest expressed by veterans, many wanting to take advantage of GI Bill benefits; a second was the start of Bemidji State's External Studies Program.

Programs require careful planning, coordination

In order to offer the program, which prepares a person for a foremanship or mid-management position, extensive planning and coordination were required. Alternatives to delivering the course on the Range were not appealing. For instance, residents would have had to commute 75-135 miles to campus.

The program was developed jointly with community college personnel, Bemidji State University campus staff, center staff and community leaders.

The experiment has been successful. Several required courses have been taught by Mesabi Community College staff at the college. Bemidji State has offered courses at several facilities -- Mesabi Community College, Virginia High School, Eveleth AVTI, Chisholm High School and Hibbing Community College.

The most pleasing result is that several residents who were pioneers in the program have achieved their goal by earning degrees. (See box, page 5.)

The External Studies Program is a means of delivering some on-campus majors to a given area if enough persons are interested. The student fulfills the same requirements as if he or she were on campus in Bemidji. Some of the courses are taught by regular Bemidji State faculty; others are taught by adjunct faculty, qualified persons living on the Range who have received approval by the state university to teach the course.

Baudhuin serves as an intermediary. He helps in assessing the demand for courses, advising students and arranging facilities.

Under a State University Board rule, a student needs 96 credit hours at a four-year institution to graduate and 45 must be from Bemidji State. Courses taken on an independent, off-campus basis or through extension count as residence work.

Bemidji State courses have been offered at Chisholm, Virginia, Hibbing, Grand Rapids and International Falls. Students are enrolling in courses other than Industrial Technology such as the community service major, law enforcement and others.

Duluth schools offer courses on Range

UMD has offered several courses on the Range including teacher education courses, pre-Master of Business Administration courses, and several short-term and non-credit courses.

The College of St. Scholastica in Duluth has shown an interest in finding out the needs of residents and offering some programs. Despite the tuition disparity between Scholastica and the area's public institutions, the college has offered some programs and hopes to deliver future programs.

The regional center has helped arrange several short, intensive continuing education programs desired by Range residents. Some are non-credit courses which are not offered by either the community colleges or AVTIs.

For example, Principles of Real Estate I and II, a 60-hour program approved by the commissioner of securities to meet the Minnesota real estate license renewal educational requirements, was offered.

The program never had been held on the Range because it was felt that the potential audience was too dispersed. But a survey conducted by the regional center office documented the need for the program, and more than 30 people enrolled.

The students, who came from 15 communities, met two nights a week for 10 weeks at Hibbing Community College. The instructional staff, under the aegis of the UMD Continuing Education and Extension Office, came from Duluth and the Range.

In order to improve the delivery of programs to the Range, the center is experimenting with a variety of educational technologies in several programs.

Chemical dependency program is popular

One of the most popular of these programs has been the chemical dependency courses. Mental health personnel identified a lack of pre-service and in-service training for chemical dependency workers on the Range, an area experiencing a serious chemical dependency problem.

Without a program on the Range, persons involved in or interested in chemical dependency counseling would have to pursue coursework outside the area or continue to await the development of a program at a local institution.

But over a 14 month period, the regional center worked to arrange for the program to be offered on the Range. The program and credits are provided by the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, and the courses are offered through the UMD Center for Continuing Education.

The center staff assists in the operation of the program. Baudhuin orders the tests, monitors exams and sends them to Minneapolis to be graded. Courses are offered one night a week at Hibbing Community College.

The program consists primarily of video tape lectures supplemented by local facilitators (psychiatrists, physicians, psychologists), other coursework and a clinical internship.

Some 35-40 persons have enrolled each time the program has been offered.

A series of video tape lectures was provided for area engineering graduates who were preparing to take the national exam. The Minnesota State Board of Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying and Landscape Architecture administers a sequence of exams to certify professional engineers.

No engineering review program had been available outside the Twin Cities area. And the only alternative for Range area engineers seeking study materials for the state engineer-in-training exam was self-directed study and review of old college tests.

But the center obtained a 19½ hour series of color, video tape cassette review lessons and home study materials from the College of Engineering at Iowa State University under a lease arrangement. A 10 week non-credit series consisting of two sessions a week at Hibbing and Virginia was arranged.

In fall 1976 a six credit course for nursing home administrators was offered in Virginia. The long-term care administration program usually is offered at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health. But with interest in the course expressed on the Range, arrangements were made for instructors to fly from the Twin Cities to the Range.

Another group of Range residents whom the center has helped serve is the Native Americans. The center has assisted Rainy River Community College both in delivering courses to the Nett Lake Reservation and bringing students to the campus. Six years ago the college enrolled one student from the reservation. By 1975, there were 54 students from the reservation enrolled. The Range center recently hired a Native American adviser under a CETA grant.

And the advisory council has supported the policy in which Rainy River waives out-of-state tuition fees for residents of the Fort Francis-Rainy River Ontario School District.

In helping to arrange and coordinate programs for the region's institutions, the center is proving that a small amount of money can go a long way. The center operates mainly on a small state appropriation; it received $45,000 for Fiscal Year 1976 and $48,236 for Fiscal Year 1977. Funds are used for the salaries of a coordinator and advisor, for supplies and other expenses.

In addition, the center has been aided by a $50,000 grant from the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Commission.

This money is being used to meet special needs that cannot be afforded in any other way. For example, subsidies ranging from $175 to $2,500 have been provided in cases where an institution is experimenting with a new offering; the subsidy serves as a backup for the institution. In most cases, need for the course has been documented but some uncertainty exists whether enough students will enroll to pay for it.

"There is no question that the center has got the institutions talking to each other more. You can give lip service to cooperation but we're competitive. Competition has created some barriers but the regional center has helped overcome them . . ."

–Richard Kohlhase

Extensive planning occurs before a subsidy is approved. Then, a memorandum of agreement between the council and the institution is drafted and signed.

Proceeds of the grant have been used for such activities as the video tape self study program for professional engineers, a coordinated effort to improve in-service training for Native American teacher aides on the Nett Lake Indian Reservation, the development of the Industrial Technology Program and preparatory courses for the master's program in business administration. Programming via KAXE radio in Grand Rapids and COAX cable TV in Hibbing has been supported. Experiments in programming via satellite are planned.

In each case the maximum subsidy has been that portion of the total expense that participating institutions have not been able to meet either through tuition income or available institutional funds.

"The experience with these limited funds at the Iron Range Center has demonstrated that important services can be stimulated and delivered with the availability of modest subsidies," Hawk said.

Representatives of area institutions who serve on the advisory council agree that the project has created a greater awareness of post-secondary opportunities and made them more accessible. The center has identified needs in the area and provided a mechanism for addressing them; it has increased use of their schools' facilities and has enabled several institutions to take risks in attempting to serve the region.

"There is no question that the center has got the institutions talking to each other more," said Richard Kohlhase, dean of instruction at Mesabi Community College. "You can give lip service to cooperation but we are competitive. Competition has created some barriers, but the regional center office has helped overcome them. We have examples of institutions through the center trying to cooperate for the benefit of the students; circumstances in the past may have precluded this cooperation.

"It takes a real effort to get all educational enterprises to be more student centered than self-centered. The regional project helps us overcome institutional inertia, and it has made all institutions become more introspective. This is good and it is breaking new ground in higher education. I don't feel higher education is responsive to change. In-house changes are slow to materialize and sometimes it takes an outside catalyst – not interference – to make us more cognizant."

"At first I was a little skeptical about how the center would work," said UMD Provost Robert Heller. "But I have been impressed by the accomplishments.

"A resident director makes all the difference in the world. Pat Baudhuin has informed the institutions of the needs on the Range. Before, someone at an institution would say he wouldn't mind teaching a course. But little was done to determine what programs Range residents wanted. Now we're finding out. The center has made a significant contribution and I feel there will be greater cooperation and participation."

Despite the center's success, some problems and concerns have arisen. The most serious concerns involve charges of unfair competition among institutions and duplication of program offerings.

Baudhuin says that the problem of competition among institutions existed before the center opened. The problem is inevitable when several institutions are involved in providing educational services, he says.

He also acknowledges that some instances of duplication in course offerings have occurred. Often this was due to poor communication. Now, however, the center attempts to help determine which institution is the appropriate one to provide programs.

"Most of these questions are resolved amicably," Baudhuin said. "Caution is required by all. We've provided through the center a vehicle to discuss and resolve the problems easier. Now, people from the institutions are sharing information and ideas."

Another concern is the availability of faculty to teach on the Range. But the response from institutions has been good with many faculty members traveling long distances to Range communities.

Attempts have been made to provide transportation to drive students from distant areas to course locations, but efforts to secure subsidies for this have been unsuccessful.

Some local college officials are concerned about the limited number of University of Minnesota extension credits that a person can apply to a master's degree. They feel that the clientele for these programs would double if the residency requirements were eased.

Overall, however, the center has helped individuals find educational opportunities, assisted individual assessment, counseling and career planning, and has developed programs for groups with special needs.

"A resident director makes all the difference in the world. Pat Baudhuin has informed the institutions of the needs on the Range . . . The center has made a significant contribution, and I feel there will be greater cooperation and participation."

– Robert Heller

Yet several challenges remain. And Range officials are optimistic that the center can provide additional upper division and graduate programs, meet industry's needs for retraining employees and help residents fulfill other needs.

Besides the need of many adults for traditional degree programs that are offered off campus, other residents seek the opportunity to work toward a degree in specially-designed programs. Baudhuin says that many adults could design their own learning plan around a vocational or life-long avocational interest by building on what they already have learned rather than following a prescribed curriculum.

He points out that the state has the mechanisms to achieve this goal such as the University Without Walls at the University of Minnesota and Metropolitan State University in St. Paul. Both of these institutions should be encouraged to expand their services statewide, he says. Also the use of a

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Baudhuin outlines short and long-range goals for center

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mobile admissions/advising service vehicle should be considered.

Finally, many adults require that their skills and abilities be verified in terms of commonly accepted academic terms such as credits or degrees. A regional academic evaluation and certification service together with a "credit bank" should be available to every Minnesotan, Baudhuin says. These services could be offered in conjunction with the mobile unit.

Baudhuin recently outlined several short-term goals for the center. They include the successful introduction of pre-MBA courses from UMD, regularly scheduled continuing education courses in long-term care from the University of Minnesota, the introduction of a labor leadership program (certificate or AA degree), the introduction of industrial safety training from UMD, continuation of the chemical dependency counseling program, cable television instruction via Hibbing Community College COAX TV and programming at the Iron Range Interpretive Center in Chisholm. Many of these goals are already being achieved.

Long-term goals include completion of a comprehensive educational needs assessment in northeastern Minnesota funded by various agencies and carried out by the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission; the acceptance by all post-secondary institutions, agencies and organizations for developing policy plans to meet the challenge of life-long learning for all area residents; the availability of non-traditional programs, and "the ultimate equalization of educational opportunity for every Minnesotan in northeastern Minnesota."

"This is not a recommendation for a new structure or new institution," Baudhuin said. "Equalization can be implemented through shared costs, short-term leasing, redefinition of service areas, the inclusion of private institutions in regional planning and redevelopment of program content and network delivery resources."

"We've only scratched the surface," Fugina said. "We can go farther and deeper. The project has no limitations."

Enrollments, courses increase dramatically

Rochester center spurs degree offerings

Some upper division courses were offered in Rochester before 1973, and to a limited extent, some baccalaureate and graduate degree opportunities were available.

But no four-year institution existed to serve the approximately 90,000 people in this southeastern metropolitan area. Too often, obtaining a degree required a major investment in time, travel and money – an investment that many residents found difficult to make.

This situation existed even though an urgent need to provide a broader curriculum and instructional support services and to increase degree opportunities had been documented for several years.

Studies in the 1960s concluded that there was a significant, unmet need for additional post-secondary education in Rochester and the surrounding area.

Convinced of the need for baccalaureate degree opportunities, community leaders attempted to bring University of Minnesota offerings to Rochester. This was accomplished through the establishment of a resident director of extension and continuing education by the University. The extension program began in 1966.

In the late 1960s, the Rochester community requested that a University branch be established. A statewide committee to support a branch campus was developed and a study by an out-of-state consultant in 1970 recommended that a new, four-year institution in Rochester should be established under the University.

The 1971 Legislature asked the HECB to assess the possible need for additional public institutions in the southeastern area of the state and the implications for existing institutions.

For the most part, testimony from Rochester citizens and University officials indicated important advantages in establishing a University campus in or near Rochester.

But presentations from representatives of other communities and institutions in the area reflected concern that a University campus in Rochester would result in unnecessary duplication of programs and might have a negative impact on existing institutions.

Following its study, the HECB recommended that the 1973 Legislature establish a consortium. The purpose of it would be to offer, or arrange to have offered, courses and programs at the upper division and graduate level which could be developed cooperatively by existing institutions.

The 1973 Legislature authorized and funded the three centers; and the Rochester center, involving several public and private institutions in the region, was established. It is designed to provide studies leading to the bachelor's and master's degrees.

After almost four years, the Rochester center is flourishing.

Enrollments and course offerings have increased dramatically. During 1973-74 there were over 200 courses offered with 1,500 headcount registrations; during 1975 there were 450 credit classes offered with a headcount registration of 8,715, and another 107 non-credit classes enrolled more than 3,734.

In 1976-77 for two quarters, 4,549 persons have enrolled in 238 credit courses. During fall quarter 3,205 persons enrolled in 124 non-credit classes.

Students vary widely in age, educational background, occupation and goals; however, a few generalizations can be made.

Most students range in age from their early 20s to 40s and 50s. They are beyond the traditional age for college and probably have experienced some interruption in their educational careers. Because they are adults, they have commit-

ments to their jobs, families and communities as well as to their education.

Because of these commitments most students prefer to attend school part time, and they require conveniently scheduled classes in accessible locations. Most of these students would find it impossible to commute to classes at various campuses in the region, and they probably would not go to school at all if the opportunity were not available in Rochester.

For some students, the center provides an opportunity for continuing education in their profession; for others it is a chance to earn advanced degrees and obtain better jobs. Still other students attend classes hoping to change careers by acquiring knowledge in a new field. The primary motivation for some is personal enrichment.

Many students are preparing to re-enter the work force by updating knowledge in a particular field or by learning about a new one. In this category are many women, who, after 10 or 20 years in their homes not only lack marketable skills but also lack confidence in their ability to perform academically and on the job.

The average age of students is 36. Approximately half reside in Olmsted County and another 40 percent live in the immediate Region 10 counties which surround Rochester.

According to a recent sample of responses from students interviewed at the consortium office, about half (186) were between the ages of 26 and 35; 11 were over 36, and 80 students were in the 20-25 age group.

One hundred students had obtained an AA degree or its equivalent; 166 students had earned bachelor's degrees and 48 had master's degrees. The largest number of students, 152, wanted to earn master's degrees and 119 wanted to earn bachelor's degrees. One hundred fifty students were enrolled in degree programs and 218 were not; 72 said they planned to enter degree programs.

ROCHESTER CENTER

Date Opened: September 1973

Headquarters: Room A102, Rochester Community College, Rochester, Minnesota 55901.

Coordinator: Dr. Wilbur Wakefield

Service Area: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Winona, Waseca, and Faribault counties.

Participating Institutions: College of St. Teresa, Mankato State University, Minnesota Bible College, Rochester AVTI, Rochester Community College, St. Mary's College, University of Minnesota, Winona State University.

Advisory Structure: Task Force of community leaders and representatives of institutions.

Chairman: Fred Hubbard of Rochester

Center Phone: 507-285-7273

Of these students pursuing degrees, 78 were working on bachelor's degrees and 66 were working on master's degrees. Of these students, 94 were enrolled in Winona with 25 enrolled at Mankato State University and 15 at the University of Minnesota.

Subject areas in which students expressed the most interest were nursing, elementary education, counseling, physical education and the master of business administration.

Program offerings are developed by a group of representatives from participating institutions. This group includes people who have primary responsibility for administering extension and off-campus programs for their institutions.

This institutional group meets once a month; its main activity is to prepare a joint schedule which lists all the courses to be offered each quarter by the participating institutions. In doing this, the group assesses the demand for courses and checks to make sure that duplication is avoided.

The development of working relationships among institutional representatives is one of the consortium's primary achievements, Hawk says.

"The group has been effective in attempting to plan, especially for the next quarter and beyond," Hawk said. "It is effective in solving some problems, particularly where competitive factors or differences in perception exist. The group is effective in helping everyone at the consortium office realize who in Rochester wants to be served."

This high level of coordination in Rochester is reflected in publication of the joint schedule. It is printed twice each quarter in the *Rochester Post-Bulletin*, and the institutions share in paying for the full-page ads. The joint schedule also is distributed at various events and is mailed to many residents. It reaches between 20,000 and 30,000 households.

"Its biggest payoff is in providing an aggregate listing on one sheet of all courses offered in one quarter in Rochester by all institutions," Wakefield said.

Students, often having visited an adviser first, select their courses from the joint schedule. The schedule helps solve students' logistical problems and helps eliminate errors in filling out registration forms. The use of the schedule saves students the time of reading all the brochures describing programs and courses offered by each institution.

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Advising is important part of each center's operation

You want to complete your college degree or earn an advanced degree. You want to take courses that will help you pursue a new career. Or maybe you just want to take a class for the fun of it.

But it's been 20 years since you last took a college course, and you have fears about going back to school.

Exploring available alternatives and making a decision on post-secondary education is now much easier for residents of the Rochester, Iron Range or Wadena areas thanks to the advising services at the center offices.

Advising is an important part of each center's operation. The primary function of the advising programs is to inform students about opportunities in the region and to communicate students' needs to participating institutions.

Each center has an advising coordinator on its staff. In Rochester, Joyce Meyers works half time for the consortium staff. Also working part-time in the consortium office are advisers from Winona State.

As the central adviser in Rochester, Ms. Meyers often is the first person a student will see at the consortium office. She knows the problems a student may encounter; she knows how to cut the red tape.

Ms. Meyers looks at the student's background and refers the student to the appropriate institution. She may help arrange for the student to talk to one of Winona State's advisers. She may set up an appointment with a community college counselor or suggest that the student contact an adviser at the University extension center just down the road.

For some students, advising is quite simple. The student comes in with clearly defined goals and needs information on courses, schedules and degree requirements or needs assistance with applications, registration or transfer of credit.

Registration forms and other information from all participating institutions are available in the consortium office.

Other students need more assistance. Some are ambivalent at first and somewhat intimidated because they've been away from academic courses for so long; these students may need much support at the beginning.

Planning a student's goals and programs is a type of negotiation process, says Project Coordinator Wilbur Wakefield.

"A student's first request may sound impossible but often it turns out that something can be arranged or worked out. Advising is the most underrated part of the operation."

Several degree programs now available

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Most offerings are standard programs which institutions bring to Rochester; however, 20 to 30 percent of the programming is special. An institution may provide a special workshop or seminar, or a professor may adapt a course to students' particular needs. Many courses are offered in response to needs expressed by students in phone conversations, surveys and interviews; some courses are suggested by companies and other organizations.

Tuition rates vary depending on the institution offering the course and whether it is taken for graduate, undergraduate or no credit.

Since the consortium opened, several degree programs have been offered. The University of Minnesota General College offers two individualized degree programs through its continuing education and extension center in Rochester – the Bachelor of General Studies and the Bachelor of Applied Studies. Students in these programs may select a wide variety of fields such as human services, chemical dependency, marketing, environment and communications.

Several Winona State options available

Several options for the bachelor's degree are available through the Winona State External Studies Program. For example, students may earn a B.A. in business administration, psychology, social science or chemistry. The Independent Major at the College of St. Teresa also is available in Rochester.

Master's degrees may be obtained from Mankato State University, Winona State University and the University of Minnesota.

Winona State offers the Master of Science in Counseling and the Master of Science in Education with Learning Disabilities Concentration. Also, Winona State offers the External Master's Degree, an individualized program designed to fulfill the student's objectives. Mankato State offers the Master of Business Administration, and Master of Science in Instructional Media and Technology.

Besides the focus on degree programs, additional options are available through the consortium. Programs and courses offered by Rochester AVTI, Rochester Community College and the University of Minnesota may form the basis for students enrolling in upper division degree programs through a participating institution.

Through the Women's Institute of Lifelong Learning, St. Teresa of Winona offers a series of day courses aimed at providing experiences for women to broaden their career and life goals. As part of this program, a seminar in Career Education and Life Planning is offered each quarter. The seminar has been expanded into a five credit course called New Horizons for Women.

Many of the consortium programs involve cooperation among institutions. For instance, students interested in business administration can earn an associate degree at Rochester Community College, a bachelor's degree from Winona State University and a master of business administration from Mankato State University – all through the consortium in Rochester.

Many students are earning degrees

Although no central record system is kept, it is known that many students have completed bachelor's and master's degrees by taking courses arranged by the center; and hundreds more are progressing toward degrees. For instance, 83 students recently earned bachelor's degrees through Winona State's External Studies Program, and 59 of those students took some or most of their courses in Rochester area programs.

Headquarters for the center is the small office located in and provided by Rochester Community College. It houses the

coordinator, several part-time advisers and a secretary.

Classes are taught at several locations in the Rochester area including the community college, the vocational-technical institute, high schools, school district offices, hospitals, churches, hotels and motels.

The center operates on a small budget from the state – approximately $45,000 per year. In addition, the center has received both direct and indirect support from many other sources during the first few years. A three-year estimate of this support comes to $131,400.

Many institutions contribute from their existing budgets by providing courses, degree programs, faculty, classroom and office space and planning and advising assistance. The Southern Minnesota Education Foundation, and IBM have provided grants to support the center.

The center has received several small library grants. Generous support from the city, county, hospitals, local school districts and others also has been provided.

The heaviest burden of making the regional center work falls on the shoulders of its coordinator, Dr. Wilbur Wakefield. His main responsibility is translating the community's needs for post-secondary education to those participating institutions which can best provide instructional offerings.

But the job involves much more. It involves bringing together a variety of people from the community and area institutions who have different concerns and interests and helping them work together effectively.

One of the main reasons for the center's success has been the participation of community leaders and institutional officials on a local advisory task force. The members meet about once every two months. They listen to progress reports from the coordinator and institutional representatives and exchange ideas about plans and problems.

"The major accomplishment of the task force has been to represent with some urgency the needs and desires and aspirations of the Rochester community," Hawk said. "It has provided a climate in which expectations for institutional activity can be reasonably expanded.

"The task force has insisted that institutions work together and not engage in unhealthy competitive activities. And it has been instrumental in creating an environment within the community which is giving this consortium approach a chance to prove itself."

The consortium has received good grades from the community although many residents would have preferred a traditional, four-year institution. Interviews indicated that community leaders are satisfied with the progress made by the center and acceptance of it is increasing.

Wakefield acknowledges that some people still desire a University branch and that the consortium may fall short of their expectations.

"But it is commonly recognized in the community that there has been significant growth in meeting educational needs," he said. "Gaps still exist. Some courses or majors that some desire still have not been developed. But there is a reaction that the style and format is appropriate to the students left here in Rochester."

Center stimulates better communication

Educational planners say that the center has increased communication among institutional representatives.

"Before the consortium, institutions talked very little to each other," Hawk said. "There was a preoccupation with structural questions and very little time was spent on programs. The consortium, however, has stimulated a significant amount of discussion about programs."

And representatives of both public and private institutions agree that the center has improved communication and cooperation among them with greater efficiencies the result.

Moreover, most are convinced that the consortium approach is the only economically feasible way to deliver upper division and graduate programs to Rochester students.

Some institutional representatives would like to see more upper division and graduate programs developed, but they say that this will depend on the availability of funds.

The State University Board's 1978-79 biennial budget includes almost $75,000 to Winona State University for participation in the Rochester consortium.

The continued interest demonstrated by institutions in the region reflects their satisfaction with the accomplishments in Rochester and potential for further development.

Wakefield says the accomplishments include coordination efforts in preparing the joint schedule, increased access to classes, development of advising services, improved student participation affecting selection of courses and programs, growth in inter-institutional activity, increased use of classroom space, broadened role for faculty, joint administrative efforts, cost sharing among institutions, growth in enrollments and planned sequences of offerings leading to degrees and certificates.

Wakefield adds that the institutions have resolved problems, and duplication has been eliminated. If anything, the problem is gaps to be filled, he says.

"The intensity of differences among institutions in the consortium is no greater than the differences which may occur within one institution," Wakefield said. "The consortium has dealt with uncertainty and doubt. The idea some may have had that colleges cannot cooperate has not held."

To outgoing Winona State University President Robert DuFresne, one of the most interesting aspects is that the experiment is working so well.

"One of the most difficult parts of the discussion four years ago was having anyone understand what a consortium was," said DuFresne. "I think we've probably given definition to the name by organizing one.

"I don't know of any that work on this scale or exactly in this manner. I think something rather remarkable has happened. A combination of elements was there to make this consortium work, and once things were put into operation it did work. What we have in effect here is an educational institution of about 4,500 students – probably more considering part-time students – who are taking higher education courses right on through to a degree offering in Rochester. And it's being done without a four-year college in the community. It's done almost entirely through cooperation.

"I think it is probably one of the best examples of cooperation with an element of free enterprise that I can think of in higher education although I don't pretend to know them all. This is unique and it is highly successful."

Despite the rapid progress, some concerns remain – primarily the availability of adequate space and funding.

With the increased awareness of opportunities in Rochester and growing enrollments, the amount of space available for classes is decreasing.

The center depends mainly on legislative appropriations which provide enough for the basic operation but little in the way of flexibility.

Although considerable direct and indirect support has been provided by the community and participating institutions, little risk capital is available. That is, the consortium doesn't have funds to use as incentives for developing many programs that are needed. Funds are limited for providing small subsidies to institutions for offering essential courses which might draw fewer students than the number needed to pay for the classes.

Institutions collect full tuition for courses they offer and are reimbursed by formula based on enrollment.

The center would like to improve the use of various support services such as library resources. It would like to explore further the possibility of more common tuition rates and improved transfer arrangements among institutions.

Many challenges remain.

Wakefield says that there is a continuing demand for courses in many specialized areas as well as a continuing demand for new, coordinated program sequences.

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Many challenges remain for Rochester consortium

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Hawk sees the main goal as to continue to expand offerings in areas of documented need, to continue to encourage institutions to work in harmony in providing offerings and to expand services to some outlying areas in the region.

"There is no way to tell how current enrollments will manifest themselves in the future," Wakefield said. "It will depend on the ability of participating institutions to offer a rich mix of programs at convenient times and planned to meet needs, sometimes in specialized areas. And it will depend on the continuation of advising efforts. It is hazardous to predict, and the consortium is not concerned with growth for growth's sake. The important factor is not numbers but responding to the needs of real people who grasp the opportunity."

"We're a small cooperative organization," Wakefield said. "We could be heavily influenced by efforts to expand or slow down by key institutions. We are dependent on the good health of programs in institutions and the commitment to deliver them."

Wadena experiment fills void in rural area

Providing post-secondary education for residents of Minnesota is no longer a major challenge in most parts of the state.

But in a few remaining regions, the state is still exploring ways to make opportunities available without constructing new facilities.

The experiment at Wadena in west central Minnesota is proving that post-secondary education can be provided inexpensively to sparsely populated, rural areas when existing institutions cooperate and coordinate their resources.

Several lower division institutions are located in the area, but Wadena is 90 miles from four, 4-year institutions. Access to many desired programs is difficult for people who reside on farms and in small towns and villages.

Recognizing that the educational needs of an increasing number of people were not being met because of this situation, the 1973 Legislature designated Wadena as one of three regional centers.

"The major reason it was established was that the area represents a void in higher education delivery in the state," said Joe Graba, former state legislator from Wadena and now a deputy commissioner in the State Department of Education.

"The center was developed to fill a void, and the general feeling is that it has been a heck of a service to the people of the area," he said.

Selection of Wadena site was timely

The selection of Wadena as a regional center site was timely.

A junior college extension center in Wadena operated by Fergus Falls Community College and Brainerd Community College and Wadena AVTI for three years was closing.

The extension center experiment was funded from community college resources, and it became difficult for the colleges to afford because they did not receive a special legislative appropriation to take courses off campus. Wadena AVTI provided the facilities and administered the center.

The project was a modest success, but it was limited to lower division courses and thus only partially met the needs, said Fergus Falls President Wesley Waage.

Nonetheless, the center is credited with stimulating an interest in post-secondary education and providing an incentive for area people to pursue post-secondary opportunities.

"The extension center proved that three institutions from two systems could operate cooperatively," said HECB President Donald Hamerlinck. "A shortcoming was that it couldn't offer upper division courses. But it paved the way for the consortium."

The region had attempted to obtain support for new institutions, but with stabilizing enrollments and fiscal constraints in the early 1970s this was not considered feasible.

"This is an excellent way to fill the gap without mass expenditures," Graba said. "In some ways it goes beyond what a community college could provide. So many people who are employed and who want to upgrade themselves can take advantage of the center. It has begun slowly to help a lot of people in the surrounding communities and make them aware of the opportunities."

"Originally, I felt I would walk the streets and sell people on going to school," Project Coordinator Floyd Hansen said. "The area is poorer and less educated than most areas of the state. You have to convince people to pursue post-secondary education."

Former HECB Executive Director Richard C. Hawk points out that the area is representative of the northern part of Minnesota and presents a vexing policy question of how to provide reasonable access in low density population areas.

"The situation provides a major challenge in determining how well the state can live up to its objective of providing opportunities at a cost effective basis in an area not adequately being served," said Hawk. "If people cannot realistically gain access with this type of operation, then we will need to look at other ways."

After more than three years, how well is the experiment working?

Hamerlinck says the project has achieved its objectives.

"Generally speaking it came at a time when institutions were consuming a great deal of time focusing on campus," said Hamerlinck, who was director of Wadena AVTI when the project began and now is director of St. Cloud AVTI. "The center forced them to look beyond the campus at other institutions and missions and to look at the clientele and needs of the clientele.

"Participation by citizens, by heads of institutions and by politicians was good. And the fact that it was able to be done with a minimum of structure was good.

"The big thing is that upper division courses are available. Before, there were vocational and lower division courses, but the only upper division courses were those brought out for public school teachers. Now, they have brought in upper division courses in several fields."

Hamerlinck said that the Wadena center is reaching many communities that weren't touched before.

"In a real sense the consortium put a focus on educational needs in outlying areas not being met," he said. "Nobody made a concentrated effort to meet the needs. The center created a bridge between off-campus courses and the efforts to meet the needs through coordination."

"The center has helped provide a better breadth of courses available on a scheduled basis," Hawk said. "It has greatly expanded the opportunity of students to earn bachelor's degrees through external studies and has functioned as a clearinghouse for people in the region who want post-secondary education."

Wadena project viewed as most critical

Due to the geographic and economic character of the region, the Wadena project is viewed by some as the most critical of the three experiments.

The rural conditions often make it difficult to attract enough students needed for an institution to afford a course offering. In addition, the region has a high rate of poverty.

Based on enrollment figures, the Wadena project has been successful. The number of students enrolling in academic courses has grown from 489 the first year of the project to 654 the second year and 870 last year. Heaviest enrollments have occurred in fall and spring; winter enrollment has been stable since the project began.

WADENA CENTER

Date Opened: September 1973

Headquarters: 411 Colfax Ave., SW, Wadena, Minnesota 56482.

Coordinator: Floyd Hansen

Service Area: All of Wadena, Todd, Mahnomen counties, east Otter Tail, southeast Becker, south Hubbard, south Cass, west Crow Wing, west Morrison, east Norman, south Polk, south Red Lake.

Participating Institutions: Bemidji State University, Moorhead State University, St. Cloud State University, Fergus Falls Community College, Brainerd Community College, University of Minnesota Morris, Concordia College (Moorhead), Wadena AVTI, Staples AVTI, Bemidji AVTI, Moorhead AVTI, St. Cloud AVTI, Brainerd AVTI, Detroit Lakes AVTI, Alexandria AVTI.

Advisory Structure: Task force of citizens from area and representatives of institutions. Several local advisory committees also established in outlying towns.

Chairperson: John Eix, Park Rapids

Center Phone: 218-631-2413

Course offerings have increased from 34 the first year to 50 the second year and 65 last year. The number of credit hours generated totaled 1,635 the first year, 2,524 the second year and 2,974 the third year.

In the first two quarters this year more than 700 students enrolled in 54 courses. The number of credit hours totaled 2,449.

More than 1,000 students have enrolled in community service courses arranged by the Wadena center, and more than 1,100 students have enrolled in vocational courses.

Community service courses are any educational activity which does not carry academic credit. Vocational courses are those offered through the area vocational-technical institutes and which the local school district is reimbursed by the state for the cost.

Hansen says the center has not attempted to duplicate the efforts of the vocational institutes or any other agencies or schools. Rather, the center attempts to assist other agencies in identifying and meeting needs.

Courses have been taught in 16 communities. They are Walker, Park Rapids, Menagha, Sebeka, New York Mills, Perham, Monticello, Onamia, Brainerd, Staples, Bertha, Little Falls, Long Prairie, Parkers Prairie, Wadena and Detroit Lakes.

A variety of educational backgrounds and goals are represented among students enrolled in courses through the center.

Recent surveys show that women comprise 51 percent of students enrolled and men 49 percent. When the center began, almost twice as many women as men were enrolled, but the gap has narrowed considerably.

Although 20 percent of the men are veterans, many taking advantage of the GI bill, Hansen isn't sure if this is a factor in the male increase.

"The men realize that this is another way to break out of the mold and change occupations," he said. "The bulk are men studying business administration. In short, I would speculate that change of occupation and personal growth are reasons for more men enrolling."

Approximately 51 percent of students enrolled are 35 or older while another 31 percent are between 25 and 34. According to one survey, 70 percent of the respondents were married and 68 percent were employed full time; 17.9 percent were unemployed. Annual income for 59 percent of the respondents ranged from $5,000 to $14,999 while 18 percent made less than $5,000 annually.

Students have come from 51 area communities. The service area includes communities in a 50 mile radius from Wadena. However, communities adjacent to the area can be included if enough people express an interest, and the community submits a request in writing.

Half the students said they were working on a teaching certificate, 38 percent were seeking a bachelor's degree, 19 percent were enrolled for personal enrichment, 15 percent were seeking a master's degree, 9 percent were undecided about their goals, 2 percent wanted to obtain a Ph.D. and 1 percent was interested in an associate degree.

The center is assisted by an advisory task force.

"The task force helps foster a continuing dialogue between the community and the post-secondary institutions," Hawk

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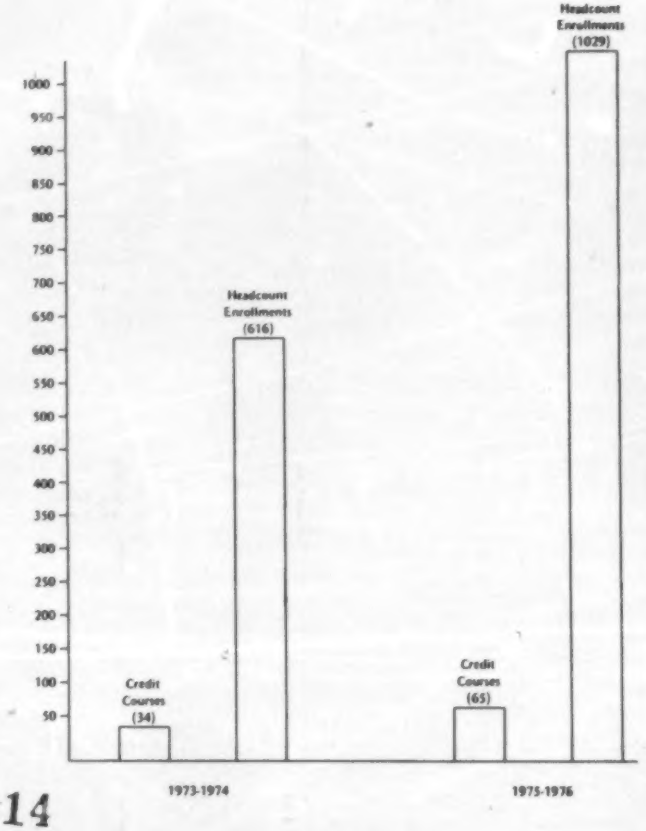
COMPARISON OF CREDIT COURSES AND HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENT IN WADENA REGION IN 1973-74 AND 1975-76



Wadena project has been rewarding to area residents

To residents of the Wadena area, the post-secondary education project has been rewarding. Take the case of Leo Uselman, owner of Uselman Electric in Wadena and a member of the center's advisory task force.

"I'm a man of meager education – eighth grade – and have been in business for 27 years," he said. "Five years ago we were a small operation doing $300,000 to half a million dollars a year. We were skating along and didn't have the education or ability to manage a bigger business with more capital and personnel.

"Then my partner and I, who has a high school education, began taking courses – courses in business management, business law, accounting. And this education has made it possible for us to develop better business methods and management.

"Now, due to the schooling we have been able to get and help from the people who went on, we have gone from a six man operation to one of 22 persons and have started another business in Clarissa (25 miles south of Wadena). It has been very rewarding. We now do over $1 million in volume and profits are much better.

"Floyd Hansen is outstanding and has done a lot for this area. I feel a lot can be accomplished if we can do a better job of letting merchants know what is being done by this kind of education in a rural area."

Mike Gibson, director of the Shady Lane Nursing Home in Wadena, shares Uselman's enthusiasm.

"Many of the people I meet socially or in business have taken one or more courses," he said. "You go down the business district and see the men and their wives who have been in class and the center gets a strong plus from them. People are real excited.

"What I enjoy the most is that people can continue their education while at home and not have to commute 90 miles to an institution. It is made available, and many have the intelligence and desire to continue their education but don't have the time or money to commute. The center is the best thing to hit town since the vocational school."

About half Gibson's 100-person staff has taken courses arranged by the center.

"The classes complement our work and enhance the abilities of the staff," he said. Staff members have taken courses in communication, philosophy, psychology, business management skills and speed reading to name a few.

Gibson is especially pleased because as a member of the center's advisory task force he has requested several classes to be arranged, and they have been provided.

"I can't think of a time that I wanted a class and it wasn't given," Gibson said. "Sometimes I felt there wasn't a Chinamen's chance of getting the class but Floyd pulled it off."

Institutions participate in variety of ways

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said. "It helps solve problems that arise; it reviews the work of the center staff on a quarterly basis, and it makes suggestions on how coordination and services could be improved."

Hawk says that the task force continuously has emphasized the need to recognize the special problems that geographical factors present.

"The task force has dealt with the need to dispel old territorial boundaries and helped support requests to get additional staff supported by CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) funds to work with local communities and organizations," Hawk said. "The task force has offered special support for maintaining public and private facilities for classes and workshops. It keeps legislators apprised of developments at the center."

Unlike the other two regional centers, the Wadena center also relies on advisory groups from the towns in the region. These advisory committees have been established in 11 communities; the largest advisory group has 22 members but most total eight or nine persons.

Members come from a broad spectrum of the community but usually include people with a strong interest in post-secondary education such as parents with children of college age or employers concerned about advanced training for their employees. The local committees are patterned after advisory committees which AVTIs use for their programs.

Hansen says the local committees have been a great help in identifying needs and assuring a good turnout for the courses.

Institutional representatives determine course offerings

Course offerings are determined each quarter by representatives of the participating institutions who meet with Hansen. They analyze the needs that have been identified and consider which institutions should offer the course. They then prepare a joint schedule which lists the academic and adult education offerings for the quarter, the location, time, length of class, fees and instructor. The joint schedule is mailed to about 5,000 persons.

In this way, the center serves as a clearinghouse for the area. A student can refer to one comprehensive schedule and doesn't have to read through separate catalogs from each institution. Registration forms from all institutions are available at the center office.

These institutions, which represent all the state's post-secondary systems, participate in a variety of ways. They provide courses, programs and degrees, faculty, classrooms and office space.

Many programs have been offered. They include a variety of general education courses, community service and vocational programs, in-service courses for educators, business courses and some graduate courses in educational administration, psychology and management science. Several short courses and workshops have been conducted. Most courses are offered at night.

The center does attempt to arrange sequences of courses or several parts of a degree program which will help residents achieve their specific educational objectives. And some degree programs have been considered.

A two year degree can be earned from Brainerd Community College or Fergus Falls Community College through any combination of full-time, part-time, day or evening attendance.

The first person to earn a degree through the efforts of the Wadena center was Joan Brandt of Wadena. She earned an AA degree in 1974 from Fergus Falls Community College. She earned 45 credits toward her degree at the extension center. When the post-secondary education center opened, she was able to complete the degree by taking courses offered by Moorhead State University, Bemidji State University, Fergus Falls Community College and Brainerd Community College.

The University of Minnesota offers two individualized

degree programs, the Bachelor of General Studies and the Bachelor of Applied Studies. These are programs in a variety of fields and often include work-study projects, internships and individual study projects.

Students may obtain degrees through the external studies program at Bemidji State, Moorhead State or St. Cloud State. Several options are available.

A growing number of people from the Wadena area are enrolling in Bemidji State's External Studies Program, says Lorraine Cecil, the program coordinator. Several have graduated.

In the Wadena area, Bemidji State is providing several general education classes. And the institution is serving people pursuing several majors. There are 18-20 degree candidates in vocational education, about six Community Service majors and several in Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement.

Moorhead State has offered a wide range of courses. Several persons are interested in the External Studies Program.

Students in external studies take courses at the Wadena center when they are applicable to the degree program. It is difficult for Moorhead State to offer all the courses required for the degree in Wadena because there aren't enough students to justify providing them. Thus, students pursuing a degree are encouraged to take independent study courses or take courses from other institutions such as Bemidji State or Fergus Falls Community College.

"There is no way that enough courses could be offered in Wadena to fulfill all the requirements for a degree and there are some hardships in getting the degree," said Audrey Jones, director of the Moorhead program. "We are exploring a variety of ways to meet the needs such as use of educational TV programs and home instructional packages. Some people drive to the campus for a course which is not easy."

Moorhead State is limited in the number of classes it can offer because of small enrollments. A class must enroll about 20 students to break even financially. Enrollments in Moorhead State courses have ranged from five or six students to 25.

"Some courses with small numbers were run at a loss, but we conducted them because we felt they were in the best interest of the center since we knew it was young and just getting started," said Larry Jones, continuing education director at Moorhead State.

Given the demographic makeup of the region, there may never be a pool of students big enough for a self supporting class but people still have a right to them, he said.

A subsidy provided by HECB to make up the difference needed to support the classes could be important, he said. Subsidies in selected cases are now provided on the Range center which has some discretionary funds for this purpose; Wadena doesn't.

Participation by institutions is good

Hawk and Hansen say they are satisfied with the response demonstrated by the institutions.

"In many cases they have taken losses to fill needs, even if it means exposing a small number of students to a course for the first time," Hansen said.

Most officials of institutions which participate in the project agree that it has provided opportunities that otherwise wouldn't be available. They are sympathetic to the difficulties of serving a sparsely populated area and to the financial problems of taking courses off campus.

Most institutional representatives agree that the center has provided service in fostering cooperation among different types of institutions, in eliminating program duplication, in providing advanced training for AVTI instructors and in helping identify needs for the institutions to meet. But some officials say that needs should be assessed in a more systematic manner. Though some question aspects of the center's operation, they look forward to resolving the problems and making the project more effective.

"The center has provided a great service to Staples -- in providing my staff and staff of other AVTIs – with courses," says Mike Matanich, director of Staples AVTI and a member of the Wadena advisory task force.

Eight Staples AVTI staff members have earned their bachelor's degrees and are pursuing master's degrees as a result of the center's effort in arranging courses from the state universities.

"Before, these people had no opportunity to pursue the degree," Matanich said. "Of my staff, more than 50 percent are now pursuing a degree program. The center did a fine job of organizing the training when we needed it and also helped provide other extension programs when they were needed."

The Wadena center has a close working relationship with Wadena AVTI. In fact, the center's office is located in a house next to the AVTI. It is provided by the institute at no charge. Courses arranged by the center also are offered in the AVTI building at no cost.

"The center has helped us in many areas," says Lowell Rasmussen, Wadena AVTI director. "It has helped us find out what people need and want, especially in the outlying areas which are part of our service area."

Fergus Falls Community College President Waage says the project has been a modest success and has provided some previously unavailable opportunities.

But Fergus Falls has not offered many courses through the project. One reason is that the college is not the prime candidate to provide the types of programs desired, Waage says. The center offers programs that are either rather specialized or avocational, too, he says.

A second reason is the cost. The college needs to work within the teaching load carried by faculty, and it is difficult with a small staff. Funds must be found to pay travel costs for the trip to Wadena. And a class should enroll 18 or more students to pay for itself.

Despite the mixture of reactions to the project, one observation is clear; the center has done much with limited resources.

The center operates on a budget of about $40,000 per year in state funds. Most of the state money is used to pay the salary of the coordinator and a secretary and other office expenses.

The center has received additional support in the form of grants and community and institutional contributions. These contributions in the first three years totaled almost $40,000. In addition, classroom space donations totaled another $22,000. This class space was in hospitals, high schools, nursing homes, community buildings, elementary schools, AVTIs, and other city buildings.

Hansen's assignment is large. As coordinator he has primary responsibility for developing the project, establishing good relations with the institutions and other agencies in the area and with residents. He serves as executive secretary of the task force and local advisory committees.

He is assisted by three adult advising coordinators employed under a CETA grant. They are assigned to Wadena, Mahnomen and Long Prairie and work with the local community groups to identify needs, report them to the center office and provide local assistance in setting up courses and workshops. Hansen also assists in advising students.

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Many goals remain for Wadena center

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In attempting to further develop the center successfully, Hansen faces several challenges.

A continuing obstacle is the fear many people have of post-secondary education. Thus, Hansen thinks that education must be promoted, but the educators must provide quality service.

"Many people say they would like to change, to upgrade themselves to pursue other occupational areas, and study for enrichment but many imply that they are afraid," Hansen said. "We have to show them that it is okay."

Another major problem is to maintain cost-effectiveness in delivering courses and still be able to reach people with courses they seek. It is difficult to enroll enough students for many classes. It is especially hard to deliver traditional courses in towns of under 500 people.

"The problem is partially addressed by identifying people committed to take certain kinds of courses, but in the long run the problem will only be fully resolved by obtaining some minimal subsidies allocated to the centers or appropriated to institutions by formula grant where the variables are distance and the number of students to be served," Hawk said.

If needs cannot be met in traditional ways, alternative forms of delivering post-secondary education may be required. Hawk points out that educators have not yet been able to mount an effective experiment using radio or television or other electronic media to deliver educational services although some abortive attempts have been made.

"The attempts have not been as good as hoped," Hawk said. "The center plans to experiment in the future with mediated instruction to supplement existing instructional methods. Also, the new statewide plan for use of federal Title I funds (community service and continuing education program) may stimulate more experiments."

The center would like to improve its library resources although materials can be obtained through Minitex (Minnesota Interlibrary Telecommunications Exchange). Also, the center would like to stabilize the varying tuition rates charged by participating institutions, but no solution has been found.

Hawk says goals to achieve are to further enhance upper division opportunities, to improve the opportunities to move from lower division to upper division, to more systematically identify local needs and match them with institutional plans for delivering services and to increase citizen participation in the process.

Hansen thinks the center has affected the lives of many residents.

"We have helped people in realizing that it is possible to study at home, and have helped them in understanding that post-secondary education is not something to be feared," he said. "We've opened many doors to educational opportunity for people who didn't realize the chance was there."

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